

## No Errors in the Bible

**PRELATES, priests, parents, pedagogues, pupils** and learned lecturers are led astray by a faulty translation of Vatican II's *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* n. 11, *Dei Verbum* (of 1965).

Abbott's translation (1966) and Flannery's (1975) have added the word, "**that**", which seems to limit Bible inerrancy to truths "for the sake of salvation":-

Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.

Flannery's *Dei Verbum* 11

Unfortunately, this faulty English translation is used in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 107.

**Does adding the "that" make it ambiguous? or even worse, erroneous?** Either way, it has led many to think that the Bible *could* have errors in texts which do not seem to be "for the sake of our salvation" — hence rampaging demythologization and scepticism.

VC II Latin (1965), and *Catechism's* original French (1992) and authoritative Latin (1997) do not have "that truth which God..." but "the truth which God...":-

...la verite que Dieu... ...veritatem, quam Deus...

So the English translation should read:-

Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm must be held as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, consequently, the books of Scripture are to be professed as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error **the truth** which God wished for the sake of our salvation to be recorded in the Sacred Writings. ...the truth as God wished it to be set down for the sake of our salvation in Sacred Writings...

### VITAL FOOTNOTE

As well as placing no limits on inerrancy in the Bible, the Fathers at Vatican II added a footnote to *Dei Verbum* n. 11. It is footnote n. 5 in Chapter III.

It gives a list of references to authoritative source documents, from St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, the Council of Trent, Leo XIII and Pius XII.

The quotes from these documents are available on request, thanks to their publication in 1985 by Father Brian Harrison O.S. (Oblates of Wisdom).

### GOSPELS NOT RELIGIOUS FICTION

Further, the same document *Dei Verbum* states:

Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy maintained and continues to maintain, that the four Gospels just named [Matthew, Mark, Luke and John], whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms, **faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation**, until the day when He was taken up (cf. Acts 1:1-2). For, after the Ascension of the Lord, the apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done, but with that fuller understanding which they, instructed by the Spirit of truth, now enjoyed. The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form, others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the situation of the churches, the while sustaining the

form of preaching, but **always in such a fashion that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus**. Whether they relied on their own memory and recollections or on the testimony of those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word," their purpose in writing was that we might know the "truth" concerning the things of which we have been informed (cf. Luke 1:2-4).

*Dei Verbum* 19.

### BLAND ASSERTIONS

Another problem for some scholars is blithely quoting each other's gratuitous assertions — an unwitting paradigm of their theories on Gospel origins. Their bald assertions, plus some faulty logic, are poor scholarship — whether it is in exegesis (= Scriptural interpretation), Church doctrine, theology, philosophy or science.

### THE MISSING MAJOR in a syllogism

A **SYLLOGISM** is a special sort of paragraph of three sentences. Each of the first two sentences is called a premise (*not* premises as houses). From the two premises comes the third sentence, and it is called a conclusion, i.e. it is *concluded* from the premises. The word 'syllogism' means putting ideas together. Its purpose is to draw a conclusion.

The **MINOR PREMISE** is usually stated first. It asserts a **particular item, fact or detail**.

The **MAJOR PREMISE** is usually stated second. It asserts a more **general item or fact, or a principle**.

**THE CONCLUSION** is the third sentence which completes the syllogism, completes the argument, completes the paragraph. It usually begins with "Therefore..."

The stock example of a syllogism is:-

Socrates is a man.

All men are mortal.

Therefore Socrates is mortal.

The study of logic develops various rules to detect nonsense. For example,

A cat is an animal.

A dog is an animal.

Therefore a cat is a dog. (!\*!\*!\*!\*)

And if you listen carefully to people, you discover that such nonsense is not at all so uncommon.

**The major premise is often not stated** if it seems obvious and indisputable — hence the sub-title, "The missing major". For example:-

Socrates is a man.

Therefore he is mortal.

So far, so good.

The catch is, "Is the unstated major premise true?" If the missing major is false, the conclusion will be false and **you might not notice it**. For example:

Bishop X believes in women priests.

Therefore his Confirmations are invalid.

The missing major premise is:

Bishops who believe in women priests cannot perform valid Confirmations.

HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT TRUE. And again:

Bishop Y hugs trees and kisses the Koran.

Therefore he has lost authority to teach or rule.

The missing major premise is:

Bishops who hug trees or kiss the Koran have lost their authority to teach and rule.

**BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE**, not as a generality.

A better major premise would be that bishops who hug trees and kiss the Koran are using ambiguous body-language (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:8). After all, we might reasonably have expected them to foresee our scandal at what they are doing. Indeed, it might have been better to pat the trees and kiss the Moslems.

### **A WARNING ON NOT GETTING LOST...**

Some websites specialize in asserting how bad things are in the Church, and they often omit their major premise, so many falsehoods pass unchallenged.

Minor premises making bald assertions need verifying. Are they a distortion of hear-say evidence, a "Chinese whisper", twisted out of recognition as it is passed round the circle? Would an accurate content require a reformulation?

False conclusions from false major premises so easily pass unnoticed. Also, if the major premises were explicitly spelled out, errors might have been apparent.

Indeed, such websites can be a form of *psychological terrorism*. They seem designed to induce panic and despair, and to stampede the gullible into rash action, such as abandoning the fulness of Christianity found only in the Catholic Church.

### **DEFECTIVE BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP**

Two examples of false bland assertions:

*The miracle of the loaves and fishes did not involve any power over inanimate nature. Jesus was simply inspiring the crowd to generosity. Those with food hidden under their overcoats produced it and shared it.*

**The unstated major premise** is that miracles over inanimate nature cannot happen because they are unscientific, and modern man must be scientific. This slips by unexamined, unproven, yet is patently false.

*The woman anointing Jesus's feet (John 11:2) is a story from the post-Resurrection Church ministering to the poor, PROOF — The Gospels were written after the Resurrection for a post-Resurrection Church ministering to the poor. What Christ does in His Mystical Body, the evangelists projected back to be what He said in His Public Life.*

The unstated major premise is that no one should believe any statement in the Gospels unless it has been cleared by "the community of modern scholars" who might decide to explain any statement in it as an invention of the Gospel writer(s). Yet what is gratuitously asserted is gratuitously denied. It is wishful thinking to assert that, because something is possible, it must have happened.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms **FOUR SENSES OF SCRIPTURE**, i.e. four levels of meaning:-

According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the **literal** and the **spiritual**, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

The **LITERAL SENSE** is the meaning conveyed by the

words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: "All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal." [The quote is from St Thomas Aquinas.]

**[EDITOR'S INTERPOLATION:** The "Literal Sense" is not exactly the same as "literally" in modern English, because the Biblical "literal sense" may be figurative or metaphorical; e.g. ascribing a tongue to God or a seat at His right hand.]

**THE SPIRITUAL SENSE.** Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.

1. The *allegorical sense*. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism, [cf. 1 Corinthians 10:2]
2. The *moral sense*. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction". [1 Corinthians 10:11; cf. Hebrews 3-4:11]
3. The *anagogical sense* (Greek: anagoge, 'leading'). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.

A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses:

The Letter speaks of deeds;  
Allegory to faith;  
The Moral how to act;  
Anagogy our destiny.

"It is the task of exegetes [interpreters] to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgement. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God." [Footnote 88 gives the source as Dei Verbum 12 §3]

"But I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me." [St Augustine]

All the above "From according to" is from Catechism of the Catholic Church 115-119

Preceding the above from Dei Verbum 12 §3 is this text:-

But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts. It is the task of exegetes...

[The quote continues as above.]

### **NEO-PATRISTIC EXEGESIS**

Neo-patristic Exegesis revives the perennial tradition of the Church Fathers, great theologians and the continuous Magisterium. See *Living Tradition* n. 136, July 2008 on <www.rtforum.org> for *A Neo-Patristic Approach to Biblical Inerrancy* by Msgr John F. McCarthy delivered at the *Conference on Biblical Inerrancy* held in St Louis, Missouri on 7th June, 2008, which helped so much in the writing of this Handouts